



GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT  
GÖTTINGEN

# **Guidelines for Conducting Annual Employee Reviews**

at the  
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen  
(excluding the  
University Medical Center Göttingen)

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## **Legal notices**

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## Preface

There should be enough time and space to deal with important matters adequately. Such matters should not be discussed in passing, but on a regular basis and in a calm environment. The Annual Employee Review is an approved management instrument and can be used as an excellent communication tool between senior staff members and employees to review their cooperation from a retrospective, contemporary and forward-looking perspective.

The dialogue is intended to build trust and, based on mutual agreements, empowers staff to complete tasks in a better way, to initiate development, to recognize problems at an early stage and to solve them in a constructive way.

Together we aim to achieve our immediate goals with a view to manage, cooperate, and strive for excellence, as excellence is not only a question of expertise in research and teaching, but also a question of successful cooperation and interaction.

As a senior staff member, you bear a special responsibility and contribute an important part for the implementation of this tool. You support the management culture and atmosphere of cooperation at the University by reflecting regularly and in a focused manner on your objectives as a senior staff member and on the wishes and needs of your employees.

Through the mutual exchange about work and the execution of tasks, you create the possibility to see working conditions, change processes and develop potential in an overall context. These processes build the foundation for our strategic goals, the development of organizational units and the further development of the University as a whole.

The Annual Employee Review is regulated by the Agreement between the Presidential Board and Staff Council in a mandatory manner.

The guidelines, as presented here, provide useful orientation and support in preparing, carrying-out and following-up on contents as part of the Annual Employee Review.

I am looking forward to a successful and joint implementation of the Annual Employee Review!

Best wishes,

Dr. Holger Schroeter

Vice-President of Finance and Human Resources

# 1. The Basic Principles of Annual Employee Reviews

## What happens during an Annual Employee Review?

The Annual Employee Review is a mandatory one-to-one meeting between the direct superior and the employee. This meeting is conducted in a structured, confidential, and fair manner and should be carried out on an equal footing between both parties. It is based on mutual respect and esteem.

Together the senior staff member and employee take stock of their cooperation, develop strategies to improve the working situation and work environment, and discuss the employee's options for further development.

As part of this process, the Annual Employee Review should not overlap with other contexts of discussion taking place within the workplace. It is not a replacement for the performance appraisal and should therefore take place at a separate time. In academic or research settings, supervisory sessions can serve the purpose of an Annual Employee Review, where fixed topics are to be discussed (see Chapter 3).

Further meetings may be required under special circumstances. A review is recommended particularly under the following circumstances:

- During the employee's probationary period ("Welcome Meeting"),
- A change in superior,
- In case of conflict,
- A qualification review is requested by the employee (see Agreement governing Qualification).

## What are the objectives and opportunities of an Annual Employee Review?

Good communication forms the basis for good cooperation. In contrast to everyday communication, subject-related or routine job-related meetings, the Annual Employee Review provides an opportunity for a structured exchange regarding the working situation, job satisfaction/incentives, tasks, achievements and development potential. It allows fundamental aspects of work and cooperation to be addressed outside of "day-to-day operations".

The Annual Employee Review provides numerous opportunities:

- It enables a mutual alignment of perspectives between the employee's individual development objectives and the senior staff member's appraisal, whilst giving consideration to the strategic developments and objectives of the University and the institution.
- It promotes constructive and goal-oriented cooperation.
- It reinforces employees' involvement in work processes by providing them with more options for participating in and actively shaping their work environment.
- It allows for a more accurate view of the individual employee's experience, knowledge, skills, abilities, interests and potentials.
- It fosters a culture of feedback and mutual learning through feedback (praise and constructive criticism).
- It promotes work and employee professional development through relevant measures for HR qualification, development and support.

- It supports objectives aimed at balancing professional duties and private life. Employees have an opportunity to address such issues voluntarily during the Annual Employee Review.

### **Who speaks with whom?**

As a rule, precisely one Annual Employee Review is conducted with each employee. The direct superior conducts the Annual Employee Review with her or his direct subordinates. It is best when the two parties involved work together as closely as possible in their everyday work setting. Since the senior staff members mostly work closely with their employees in day-to-day operations, it is preferable for the administrative superior to conduct the Annual Employee Reviews.

In the following cases, several Annual Employee Reviews may be conducted with one employee: If the employee works at separate workplaces within the organisational unit, the review must be conducted in each case with the direct superior. For employees who report to several superiors within one organisational unit, one senior staff member should be instructed to conduct the Annual Employee Review. The stipulation of responsibility is decided by the management of the respective faculties, central / joint institutions or departments / staff units. If necessary, two meetings may be conducted with two superiors.

Annual Employee Reviews are mandatory for the following employee groups: administrative staff and employees, technical employees and research associates. For academic assistants within a qualification programme, the supervisory sessions can serve as an Annual Employee Review, in which specified topics may be discussed as delineated in the Annual Employee Review (see Chapter 3). Student assistants as well as academic assistants who are not participants of a qualification programme are excluded from this regulation.

In the event that an employee works less than one-third of a full-time position as specified by contractual working hours for salaried employees, there is no obligation to conduct an annual employee review. The annual employee review can, however, be conducted voluntarily or upon request. In addition, annual employee reviews will not be conducted with the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Representative for Severely Disabled Persons, or employees who function as members of the Staff Council.

Foremen or overseers can only be designated as responsible senior staff members for carrying out annual employee reviews should they work more than half of the working hours of a full-time, salaried position.

Annual Employee Reviews are governed by the "one-to-one principle". Should a conflict exist between the conversation partners, an initial meeting with a person of trust may be arranged on behalf of the senior staff member or the respective employee in order to clarify the situation so that the Annual Employee Review can successfully take place. This person of trust can be a member of the HR Department, the Staff Council or the Equal Opportunities Officer responsible for that faculty or institution. Should the conflict be resolved in attendance of a person of trust at the initial meeting, the Annual Employee Review may be carried out as part of the initial meeting (irrespective of the "one-to-one principle").

The following structural model can provide orientation for conducting Annual Employee Reviews:

<b>Organisational unit</b>	<b>Organisational position of the employees</b>	<b>General responsibility for the conduct of the Annual Employee Review (generally the direct superior)</b>
<b>Acad. institution within faculty</b>	Directly assigned to head / director	Head / Director
	Other employees	Direct superior

<b>The Dean's Office</b>	Directly assigned to responsible Dean	Dean
	Other employees	Direct superior

<b>Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) Research Training Group Centres or similar</b>	Directly assigned to spokesperson or head / director	Spokesperson and/or head / director
	Other employees	Direct superior

<b>Central institutions e.g. University Sports Centre</b>	Head / Director	Vice-President
	Directly assigned to head / director	Head / Director
	Other employees	Direct superior

<b>SUB</b>	Deputy directors	Director
	Directly assigned to director	Director
	Other employees	Direct superior

<b>Central Administration: Departments/ Staff units</b>	Head / Director	President / Vice-President
	Directly assigned to head / director	Head / Director
	Other employees	Direct superior

Essentially, the faculties / academic institutions determine how the hierarchical or subordinate relationships within their institutions are defined, and are responsible for creating a structural plan that specifies with whom the Annual Employee Review is conducted. Should questions arise, faculty representatives can offer orientation and assistance.

## **2. Organisation of the Annual Employee Review**

The Annual Employee Review takes place in the first quarter of each year and is scheduled as an official meeting. The Review is conducted during work time.

The senior staff member sends out the invitation for the Annual Employee Review at least 2 weeks before the scheduled date. If the senior staff member does not offer an Annual Employee Review, the procedure follows the provisions provided in Article 2 (4) of the Work Agreement.

In general, an hour should be allocated for the Annual Employee Review to ensure that it is conducted calmly and without time pressure.

An Annual Employee Review should be thoroughly prepared to ensure that it takes place effectively and on a positive note. It is important that both senior staff member and employee prepare for the Annual Employee Review independently of one other. This preparation takes place during work time.

Checklists and working aids available on the homepage (see link: [www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche)) can be used to prepare for the Annual Employee Review.

To ensure that the Annual Employee Review can be conducted without interruption, an appropriate venue should be selected that eliminates any and all sources of disturbance (e.g. telephone calls, interruptions from uninvolved persons, noise, and other forms of disturbance).

The senior staff member and the employee are to agree at the start of the review on who is to write the minutes. The record of minutes (see template Annex 1 of the Work Agreement) is recommended for use, but is not mandatory. One copy remains with the senior staff member and one with the employee. It must be archived in such a way that it is inaccessible to third parties. The record is not part of the personnel file. As a rule, it is destroyed after three years.

The senior staff member and employee confirm in writing on the documentation form (see Template Annex 2 of the Work Agreement) that the Annual Employee Review was carried out. It is then forwarded without delay to the HR Department, where it is added to the employee's personnel file.

## **3. Subjects and Content of the Annual Employee Review**

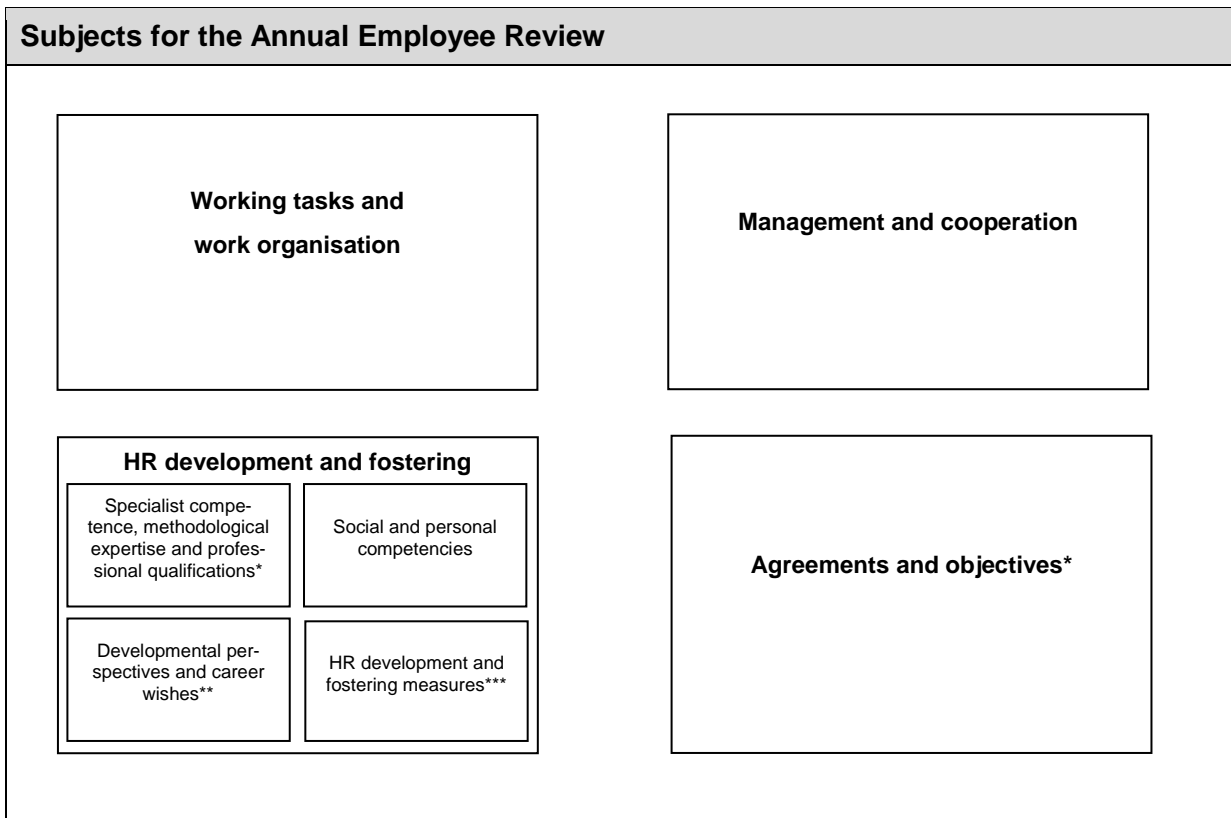
In terms of content, the Annual Employee Review comprises the following topics:

- "Working tasks and work organisation"
- "Management and cooperation"
- "HR development and fostering"
- "Agreements and objectives"

To support them in preparing for, and conducting, the Annual Employee Reviews, both senior staff members and employees can find an array of templates, working aids and checklists on the following website: [www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche)



## Subjects for the Annual Employee Review



\* For doctoral candidates, this part of the Annual Employee Review can be replaced by the annual supervisory sessions provided by the graduate schools.

\*\* Supplementary to the Annual Employee Review, doctoral candidates, as well as persons aspiring to achieve a "Habilitation" at Göttingen University or carry out work equivalent to that of a "Habilitation", can take advantage of the personalised career counselling services.

\*\*\* Personnel development programmes and qualification measures for human resources are offered by numerous partners at Göttingen University, which are designed to support and advise senior staff members, employees, and young researchers. An overview of the contact persons and websites is available at: [www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche).

### Working tasks, work organisation

This thematic component begins with an analysis of the working tasks and their integration within work processes. Together with the senior staff member, the employee should be encouraged to critically reflect on the job assignment and fulfilling the tasks, to share their opinion about new tasks and requirements, and to identify sources of possible disruption in work processes and the work organisation in order to propose constructive solutions.

An additional focal point revolves around an analysis of the work environment. This may include such aspects as equipment and available technologies at the workplace, but may also include other factors such as personal and family circumstances, but only if the employee voluntarily addresses these subjects. The Annual Employee Review may also address the subject of (disability-related) restrictions at the workplace at the request of an employee with disabilities. Before implementing any measures, a person of trust advising the disabled employee

and, if necessary, the Representative for Severely Disabled Persons appointed by the employer to represent the concerns of persons with disabilities, should be consulted.

## **Management and cooperation**

Under the "Management and cooperation" category, the complex interplay of work relationships should also be discussed. This comprises both the cooperation and information exchange with the senior staff member, as well as within the team and the entire work environment, but also encompasses additional interfaces within (and/or outside) the institution.

## **HR development and further qualification**

At this point, the employee's development potential and their development aspirations should be addressed. It should be clarified which skills are necessary for employees to perform their tasks and which skills will help advance individual career planning objectives. As appropriate, measures for developing competencies should be discussed and agreed upon. Agreements concerning qualification measures may and can arise from the Annual Employee Review. The Annex form attached to the Agreement governing Qualification can be used for this purpose. If the employee expresses the wish for a separate qualification review, in addition to the Annual Employee Review, this must be complied with (see Agreement governing Qualification).

In the case of junior researchers, additional focal points include "goals in terms of doctoral and post-doctoral qualifications", "planned scientific/scholarly activities", "competencies in the field of teaching", as well as "opportunities and risks of different career goals and paths".

## **Agreements and objectives**

In every Annual Employee Review, agreements should be made that give both employee and senior staff members an orientation for the coming year. This should be binding for both sides. Agreements can be made with respect to the above-mentioned subject areas, as well as future workplace orientation, such as types of tasks, areas of responsibility and cooperation.

Concrete objectives should also be defined that involve the practical work and the wish for change. The following should be considered when formulating and agreeing on objectives (the SMART principle):

- S = specific: the objectives should be formulated in clear and positive terms in relation to the condition of change aspired to in the future (challenging, but achievable),
- M = measurable: metrics should be defined that can be used to quantify implementation,
- A = acceptable: an agreed objective should be accepted by all parties,
- R = realistic: attention should be paid to ensure that what is agreed upon is feasible and executable (temporal, organisational, financial),
- T = timed: set deadlines for achieving the objectives and who assumes responsibility.

The senior staff member and employee should interact at regular intervals over the course of the year with respect to the status of implementation of these objectives.

## 4. Annual Employee Review Procedure and Culture

The following structure is recommended for the conduct of Annual Employee Reviews:

- Retrospective view
- Current situation
- Looking ahead
- Arrangements and agreements

The **retrospective view** offers an opportunity for the parties to re-visit the objectives and arrangements of the past Annual Employee Review and reflect on, and take stock of, the work processes and cooperation situation. If certain objectives have not been achieved, the root cause should be evaluated. If it is the first Annual Employee Review, the period of time since hiring can be reviewed.

The analysis of the **current situation** serves to take stock of the status quo. The conduct and thematic components have been described in detail in the previous chapter "Subjects and content of the Annual Employee Review".

**Looking ahead:** The contents of this section of the Annual Employee Review focus on future orientation. Personal aspirations can be addressed based upon discussions that were carried out with respect to expectations and potential changes to the working situation, and how they line up with the University's strategic goals or the team situation.

At the end of the Annual Employee Review, concrete **arrangements** can be made and recorded (see template Annex 1 of the Agreement). It is important to document what should be done within a specific time frame and by whom. Both the senior staff member and employee should ensure that the agreed content and objectives are implemented. The senior staff member accompanies and supports the employee in doing so and ensures that the required framework conditions are in place. During the entire work period, implementation progress should be monitored and discussed at regular intervals.

During all phases of the Annual Employee Review, compliance with the following basic principles is recommended:

- Assume an appreciative attitude and show this to your conversation partner.
- Make sure to ask questions inviting your conversation partner to describe their situation from her / his perspective.
- Keep an open mind and try to understand your conversation partner's standpoint.
- Use a civil and objective tone during the discussion.
- Let your conversation partner have their say and do not enter into a monologue.
- Do not hesitate to address difficult issues. This is the only way to achieve long-term improvements.

Additional tips and recommendations about the basic principles of communication can be found on the website: [www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche)

## **5. Introduction and in-process support**

As part of its qualification programme, the HR Department offers basic training courses for senior staff members.

Supplementary to the events and training courses, further working aids, checklists and information are available on the employee portal (Mitarbeiterportal) and website at [www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche).

The employees of the HR Department are happy to help with questions and accompany the processes within their sphere of responsibility. They will provide consultation and referrals to neutral external moderators if needed. For more information and contact persons, please see the following link:

**[www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/jahresgespraeche)**

**Annex 1: Template for record of minutes (please amend details as needed)**

**Record of the summarised results\* with reference to the Annual Employee Review on \_\_\_\_\_**

between \_\_\_\_\_ (Senior staff member)

and \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee)

<b>Working tasks, work organisation</b>		
1. 2. 3.	Who? Re: 1. Re: 2.	
	By when? Re: 1.	
	Who is otherwise informed?	
<b>Management and cooperation</b>		
	Who?	
	By when?	
	Who is otherwise informed?	
<b>HR Department</b>		
(if necessary, need for qualification review)	Who?	
	By when?	
	Who is otherwise informed?	
<b>Further agreements and objectives</b>		
	Who?	
	By when?	
	Who is otherwise informed?	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of senior staff member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of employee

\* These records are to be dealt with confidentially. Please ensure that the file contains read and access protection on submission, that the data are stored securely, and that both copies are retained. As a rule, the record is to be destroyed after three years.

## Annex 2: Sample documentation

- Confidential -

**Georg-August-Universität Göttingen Public Law Foundation**  
**HR Department**

Regulation No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Goßlerstrasse 5/7**

**37073 Göttingen, Germany**

### Confirmation

— To be kept in the personnel files —

A structured Annual Employee Review was conducted between

\_\_\_\_\_ (Senior staff member)

and \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Organisational Unit/Institution)

on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date),

the contents of which are confidential.

The Annual Employee Review was not conducted because

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please state the reason (e. g. employee is currently on leave etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of senior staff member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of employee